

M.^{rs} Melmoth in Queen Elizabeth.



Unhappy man! My yielding soul is touch'd.

Act 4.th Scene 1.st

Published by Harrison & Co. April 11779.

Very late

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11770 93
256

THE
EARL OF ESSEX.

A
TRAGEDY.

As it is Acted at the

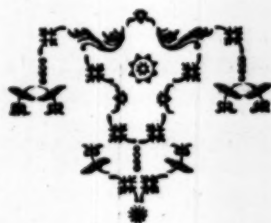
THEATRE-S-R O Y A L

I N

Drury-Lane and Covent-Garden.

Written by HENRY JONES.

K



L O N D O N :

Printed for HARRISON and Co. No 18, Paternoster-Row; and Sold, likewise, by
J. WENMAN, Fleet-Street; and all other Booksellers.

M DCC LXXIX.

PROLOGUE.

OUR desp'rate bard a bold excursion tries,
Tho' danger damp'd his wings, he dar'd to rise:
From hope, high rais'd, all glorious actions spring;
'Tis hence that heroes conquer, poets sing.
E'en he may feel the soul-exalting fire,
Fame prompts the bumblest bosom to aspire.
Without a guide this rash attempt he made,
Without a clue from art, or learning's aid.
He takes a theme where tend'ring passions glow,
A theme your grandfathers felt with pleasing woe.
Effex' sad tale he strives to clothe anew,
And hopes to place it in a stronger view.

Poets, like painters, may, by equal law,
The labour'd piece from different masters draw;
Perhaps improve the plan, add fire and grace,
And strike th' impassion'd soul through all the face.
How far our author has secur'd a claim
To this exalted palm, this wish'd-for fame,
Your generous sentiments will soon declare:
Humanity is ever prone to spare.

'Twere baseness, then, your candour to distrust;
A British audience will, at least, be just.

A flattering truth he fearful must confess,
His sanguine friends made promise of success;
But that, he fears, their ardent wishes wrought,
Since partial favour seldom sees a fault.
Then bear, like patient friends, this first essay,
His next shall thank you in a nobler way.

No beau, no courtier, nor conceited youth;
But then so rude, he always speaks the truth;
I told him he must flatter, learn address,
And gain the heart of some rich patroness:
'Tis she, said I, your labours will reward,
If you but join the bricklay'r with the bard;
As thus—Should she be old, and worse for wear,
You must re-verse her, front her, and repair;
If crack'd in fame, as scarce to bear a touch,
You cannot use your trowel then too much;
In short, whate'er her morals, age or station,
Plaster and white-wash in your dedication.
Thus I advis'd—but he detects the plan:
What can be done with such a simple man?
A poet's nothing worth and nought availing,
Unless he'll furnish where there is a failing.
Authors in these good times are made and us'd,
To grant those favours nature has refus'd.
If he won't job, what bounty can be crav'd?
We pay for what we want, not what we have.—
Nay, though of every blessing we have store,
Our sex will always wish—a little more.—
If he'll not bend his heart to this his duty,
And sell, to who will buy, wit, honour beauty;
The bricklay'r still for him the proper trade is,
Too rough to deal with gentlemen and ladies.—
In short—they'll all avoid him, and neglect him,
Unless that you, his patrons, will protect him.

EPILOGUE.

NEWs! news! good folks, rare news, and you
shall know it—

I've got intelligence about our poet!
Who do you think he is?—You'll never guess;
An Irish Bricklayer, neither more nor less.
And now the secret's out, you cannot wonder,
That in commencing bard he made a blunder.
Has he not left the better for the worse,
In quitting solid brick for empty verse?
Can he believe th' example of old Ben,
Who chang'd, like him, the trowel for the pen,
Will in his favour move your critic bowels?
You rather wish, most poets pens were trowels.
Our man is honest, sensible, and plain,
Nor has the poet made him pert, or vain:

Dramatis Personæ.

M E N.

The Earl of ESSEX.
Earl of SOUTHAMPTON.
Lord BURLINGHAM.
Sir Walter RALEIGH.
Lieutenant of the Tower.

W O M E N.

Queen ELIZABETH.
Countess of RUTLAND.
Countess of NOTTINGHAM.
Lords, Ladies, and Attendants.



EARL OF ESSEX.

ACT I.

SCENE, an Anti-Chamber in the Palace.

Enter Burleigh and Raleigh.

Bur. THE bill, at length, has pass'd opposing numbers,

Whilst crowds seditious clamour'd round the senate,
And headlong faction urg'd it's force within.

Ral. It has, my lord.—The wish'd for-day is come,

When this proud idol of the people's hearts
Shall now no more be worshipp'd.—Essex falls.
My lord, the minute's near that shall unravel
The mystic schemes of this aspiring man.

Now fortune, with officious hand, invites us
To her, and opens wide the gates of greatness,
The way to power. My heart exults: I see,
I see, my lord, our utmost wish accomplish'd!

I see great Cecil shine without a rival,
And England blest him as her guardian saint.

Such potent instruments I have prepar'd,
As shall, with speed, o'erturn this hated man,
And dash him down, by proof invincible.

Bur. His day of glory now is set in night,
And all my anxious hopes, at last, are crown'd.
Those proofs against him, Raleigh—

Ral. All arriv'd.

Bur. Arriv'd! how? when?

Ral. This very hour, my lord:

Nay more, a person comes, of high distinction,
To prove some secret treaties made by Essex,
With Scotland's monarch and the proud Tyrone.

Bur. How say'st? to prove 'em?

Ral. Ay, my lord, and back'd

With circumstances of a stronger nature.
It now appears, his secretary Cuff,
With Blunt and Lee, were deep concern'd in this
Destructive scheme, contriv'd to raise this lord,
And ruin Cecil. O, it is a subtle,
A deep laid mischief, by the earl contriv'd,
In hour malignant, to o'erturn the state,
And (horror to conceive!) dethrone the queen.

Bur. These gladfome tidings fly beyond my hopes!
The queen will listen now, will now believe,
And trust the counsel of her faithful Burleigh.
Dispose 'em well, till kind occasion calls
Their office forth, lest prying craft meanwhile
May tamper with their thoughts, and change their
minds:

Let them, like batteries conceal'd, appear

At once, both to surprise and to destroy.

Ral. This sudden shock, my lord, this weighty
stroke,

Must press him headlong down to deep destruction:
Indignant fate marks out this dreaded man,
And fortune now has left him.

Bur. Thank the changeling;

His servile faction soon will stand aghast,
And sink, at distance, from his threat'ning fall.

Ral. His headstrong friend, the bold Southamp-
ton, too,

Now finds his rash endeavours all defeated;
And storms at thee and the impeaching commons.

Bur. Let him rave on, and rage.—The lion in
The toils entangled, wastes his strength, and roars
In vain; his efforts but amuse me now.

Enter Gentleman.

Gent. My lord, the Lady Nottingham desires,
With much impatience, to attend your lordship.

Bur. What may the purport of her bus'ness be!
Her tender wishes are to Essex ty'd
In love's soft fetters, and endearing bands.—
Conduct her in.—[Exit Gentleman.

And you, my Raleigh, watch Southampton's steps;
With care observe each movement of his friends;
That no advantage on that side be lost.

[Exit Raleigh.

Enter Lady Nottingham.

Not. Thrice hail to rescu'd England's guiding ge-
nius!

His country's guardian, and his queen's defence.
Great Burleigh, thou whose patriot bosom beats
With Albion's glory and Eliza's fame;
Who shield'dst her person, and support'dst her throne;
For thee, what fervent thanks, what offer'd vows,
Do prostrate millions pay!

Bur. Bright excellence,

This fair applause too highly over-rates,
Too much extols, the low deserts of Cecil.

Not. What praises are too high for patriot-worth;
Or what applause exceeds the price of virtue?

My lord, conviction has at last subdu'd me,
And I am honour's proselyte—too long
My erring heart pursued the ways of faction;
I own myself t'have been your bitt'rest foe,
And join'd with Essex in each foul attempt
To blast your honour, and traduce your fame.

Bur. Tho' ne'er my wishing heart could call you
friend,

Yet honour and esteem I always bore you;
And never meant, but with respect to serve you.

Not. It is enough, my lord, I know it well,
And feel rekindling virtue warm my breast;
Honour and gratitude their force resume
Within my heart, and every wish is yours.
O Cecil, Cecil, what a foe hast thou,
A deadly foe, whilst hated Essex lives!

Bur. I know it well, but can assign no cause.

Not. Ambition's restless hand has wound his
thoughts

Too high for England's welfare; nay, the queen
Scarce sits in safety on her throne, while he,
Th' audacious Essex, freely treads at large,
And breathes the common air. Ambition is
The only god he serves, to whom he'd sacrifice
His honour, country, friends, and ev'ry tie
Of truth, and bond of nature; nay, his love.

Bur. The man that in his public duty fails,
On private virtue will disdainful tread,

As steps to raise him to some higher purpose:
In vain each softer wish would plead with him,
No tender movement in his soul prevails,
And mighty love, who rules all nature else,
Must follow here in proud ambition's train.

Not. Pronounce it not, my soul abhors the sound,
Like death.—Oh, Cecil, will you kindly lend
Some pity to a wretch like me?

Bur. Command,
Madam; my power and will are yours.

Not. Will Cecil's friendly ear vouchsafe to bend
It's great attention to a woman's wrongs,
Whose pride and shame, resentment and despair,
Rise up in raging anarchy at once,
To tear with ceaseless pangs my tortur'd soul?
Words are unequal to the woes I feel,
And language lessens what my heart endures.
Passion repuls'd with scorn, and proud disdain,
Recoils indignant on my shrinking soul,
Beats back my vital springs, and crushes life.

Bur. Madam, your wrongs, I must confess, are
great;

Yet still, I fear, you know not half his falsehood.
Who, but the false, perfidious Essex, could
Prefer to Nottingham a Rutland's charms?
Start not—By Heav'n, I tell you nought but truth,
What I can prove, past doubt; that he receiv'd
The Lady Rutland's hand, in sacred wedlock,
The very night before his setting out
For Ireland.

Not. Oh, may quick destruction seize 'em!
May furies blast, and hell destroy their peace!
May all their nights—

Bur. I pray, have patience, Madam,
Restrain a while your rage; curses are vain.
But there's a surer method to destroy him;
And if you'll join with me, 'tis done: he falls.

Not. Hal! say'st thou, Burleigh! Speak, my ge-
nius, speak;

Be quick as vengeance's self to tell me how.

Bur. You must have heard the commons have
impeach'd him,

And we have proofs sufficient for his ruin.
But the queen—you know how fair he stands
In her esteem; and Rutland too, his wife,
Hath full possession of the royal ear.
What then avail impeachments, or the law's
Severest condemnation, while the queen
May snatch him from th' uplifted hand of justice?
Here then, my Nottingham, begins thy task:
Try ev'ry art t' incense the queen against him,
Then step between her and the Lady Rutland.
Observe Southampton too, with jealous eye;
Prevent, as much as possible, his suit:
For well I know he will not fail to try
His eloquence on the behalf of Essex.

Not. It shall be done; his doom is fix'd; he dies.
Oh, 'twas a precious thought! I never knew
Such heart-felt satisfaction! Essex dies;
And Rutland, in her turn, shall learn to weep.
The time is precious; I'll about it straight.
Come, vengeance, come, assist me now to breathe
Thy venom'd spirit in the royal ear. [*Exit Not.*]

Bur. There spoke the very genius of the sex,
A disappointed woman sets no bounds
To her revenge. Her temper's form'd to serve me.
Enter Raleigh.

Ral. The Lord Southampton, with ungovern'd
Rebels about his disappointed measures. [*rage,*
I met him in the outward court; he seeks
In haste your lordship, and, forgetting forms,
Pursues me hither, and demands to see you.

Bur. Raleigh, 'tis well—Withdraw—Attend
the queen.

Leave me to deal with this o'erbearing man.

[*Exit Raleigh.*]

Enter Southampton.

South. Where is the man, whom virtue calls her
friend?

I give you joy, my lord!—Your quenchless fury
At length prevails—and now your malice triumphs
You've hunted honour to the toil of faction,
And view his struggles with malicious joy.

Bur. What means, my lord?

South. Oh, fraud! shall valiant Essex
Be made a sacrifice to your ambition!
Oh, it smells foul indeed, of rankest malice,
And the vile statesman's craft. You dare not sure
Thus bid defiance to each shew of worth,
Each claim of honour: dare not injure thus
Your suffering country in her bravest son!

Bur. But why should stern reproach her angry brow
Let fall on me? Am I alone the cause
That gives this working humour strength? Do I
Instruct the public voice to warp his actions?
Justice, untaught, shall poize th' impartial scales,
And every curious eye may mark the beam.

South. The specious shield, which private malice
Is ever blazon'd with some public good;—[*beats,*
Behind that artful fence, sculk low, conceal'd,
The bloody purpose, and the poison'd shaft;
Ambition there, and envy, nestle close;
From thence, they take their fatal aim unseen;
And honest merit in the destin'd mark.

Bur. My country's welfare, and my queen's com-
mand,

Have ever been my guiding stars through life,
My sure direction still.—To these I now [*loud*
Appeal;—from these, no doubt, this lord's miscon-
Hath widely stray'd; and reason, not reviling,
Must now befriend his cause.

South. How ill had Providence
Dispos'd the suffering world's oppress'd affairs,
Had sacred right's eternal rule been left
To crafty politicians partial sway!
Then power and pride would stretch th' enormous
And call their arbitrary portion, justice: [*grasp,*
Ambition's arm, by av'rice urg'd, would pluck
The core of honesty from virtue's heart,
And plant deceit and rancour in it's stead:
Falsehood would trample then on truth and honour,
And envy poison sweet benevolence.
Oh, 'tis a goodly group of attributes,
And well befits some statesman's righteous rule!
Out, out upon such base and bloody doings!
The term of being is not worth the sin;
No human bosom can endure it's dart.
Then put this cruel purpose from thee far,
Nor let the blood of Essex whelm thy soul.

Bur. 'Tis well, my lord! your words no comment
Yet mark me well, my lord, the clinging ivy [*need;*
With th' oak may rise, but with it too must fall.

South. Thy empty threats, ambitious man, hurt
The breast of truth. Fair innocence, and faith, [*not*
Those strangers to thy practis'd heart, shall shield
My honour, and preserve my friend.—In vain,
Thy malice, with unequal arms, shall strive
To tear the applauded wreath from Essex's brow;
His honest laurel, held aloft by fame,
Shall bloom immortal to the latest times:
Whilst thou, amidst thy tangling snares involv'd,
Shall sink confounded, and unspiced fall.

Bur. Rail on, proud lord, and give thy choleric vent
It wastes itself in vain; the queen shall judge
Between us in this warm debate. To her
I now repair; and in her royal presence
You may approve your innocence and faith.

Perhaps you'll meet me there.—Till then, farewell.

[Exit.]

South. Confusion wait thy steps, thou cruel
My noble and illustrious friend betray'd, [monster!
By crafty faction and tyrannic pow'r,
His sinking trophies, and his falling fame,
Oppress my very soul. I'll to the queen,
Lay all their envy open to her view,
Confront their malice, and preserve my friend. [Exit.]

The Queen discovered, sitting on her throne.

Raleigh, Lords, and Attendants.

Q. Without consulting me! presumptuous man!
Who governs here?—What! am not I your queen?
You dur'd not, were he present, take this step.

Ral. Dread sovereign, your ever faithful commons
Have, in their gratitude and love for you,
Preferred this salutary bill against him.

Enter Burleigh.

Q. You, my lord Burleigh, must have known of
The commons here impeach the earl of Essex [this.
Of practising against the state and me.

methinks I might be trusted with the secret.
Speak, for I know it well, 'twas thy contrivance.
Ha! was it not? You dare not say it was not.

Bur. I own, my judgment did concur with theirs.
His crimes, I fear, will justify the charge,
And vindicate their loyalty and mine.

Q. Ha! tell not me your smooth, deceitful story!
I know your projects, and your close cabals.
You'd turn my favour into party feuds,
And use my sceptre as the rod of faction:
But Henry's daughter claims a nobler soul.
I'll nurse no party, but will reign o'er all,
And my sole rule shall be to bless my people:
Who serves them best has still my highest favour;
This Essex ever did.—

Enter Southampton.

Behold, Southampton,
What a base portrait's here! The faithful Essex
Here drawn at large associating with rebels,
To spoil his country and dethrone his queen.

South. It is not like.—By Heav'n the hand of envy
Drew these false lines; distorted far from truth
And honour, and unlike my noble friend
As light to shade, or hell to highest heav'n.
Then suffer not, thou best of queens, this lord,
This valiant lord, to fall a sacrifice
To treachery and base designs; who now
Engages death in all his horrid shapes,
Amidst a hardy race, inur'd to danger;
But let him face to face, this charge encounter,
And ev'ry falsehood, like his foes, shall fly.

Q. To me you seem to recommend strict justice,
In all her pomp of power. But are you sure
No subtle vice conceal'd assumes her garb?
Take heed, that malice does not wear the mask,
Nor envy deck her in the borrow'd guise.
Impeach the very man to whom I owe
My brightest rays of glory! Look to it, lords,
Take care, be cautious on what ground you tread;
Let honest means alone secure your footing.
Raleigh and you withdraw, and wait our leisure.

[Exit Raleigh and South.]

Lord Burleigh, stay; we must with you have farther
Conference.—I see this base contrivance plain.

Your jealousy and pride, your envy of
His shining merit, brought this bill to light.
But mark me, as you prize our high regard
And favour, I command you to suppress it:
Let not our name and power be embarrass'd
In your perplexing schemes. 'Twas you began,
And therefore you must end it.

Bur. I obey.

Yet humbly would intreat you to consider

How new, unpopular, this step must be,
To stand between your parliament's enquiry
And this offending lord.—We have such proofs—

Q. Reserve your proofs to a more proper season,
And let them then appear. But once again
We charge you, on your duty and allegiance,
To stop this vile proceeding; and to wait
Till Essex can defend himself in person.
If then your accusations are of force,
The laws, and my consent, no doubt, are open.
He has my strict command, with menace mix'd,
To end effectually this hated war,
Ere he presume to quit the Irish coast.

Bur. Madam, my duty now compels me to—

[Exit Burleigh.]

Q. No more! see that my orders be obey'd.

Essex a traitor!—it can never be—

His grateful and his honest soul disdains it.—

I know him hot, ambitious, rash, impatient;

But then he's firmly anchor'd in his duty,

Tho' stormy passions toss him to and fro.

Can he prove false? so high advanc'd, so honour'd,

So near my favour—and—I fear, so near

My heart! Impossible.—This Burleigh hates him,

And, his rival, therefore would destroy him;

But he shall find his narrow schemes defeated.

In vain their fraudful efforts shall combine

To shake my settled soul, my firm design;

Resolv'd to lift bright virtue's palm on high,

Support her grandeur, and her foes defy. [Exit.]



ACT II.

Enter Burleigh and Raleigh.

Bur. **E**SSEX arriv'd! Confusion to my hopes!
His presence will destroy me with the queen.

I much suspect he had some private notice,

Perhaps, a punctual order, to return.

He lurks too near her heart.—What's to be done?

[Exit Raleigh.]

Now is th' important crisis—

Keep up thy usual strength; my better genius,

Direct my steps to crush my mortal foe,

Enter Queen and Raleigh.

Q. It cannot be! Return'd without my leave!

Against my strict command!—Impossible!

Ral. Madam, the earl is now at court, and begs
An audience of your majesty.

Q. Amazing!

What! break his trust! desert his high command!

For sake his post, and disobey his queen!

'Tis false—invented all.—You wish it so.

Bur. Madam, I with some other rumours false;
Reports, I fear, of great concern to you.

Q. What rumours? what reports? Your frown
would much

Denote: your preface seems important.—Speak.

Bur. Some new commotions are of late sprung up

In Ireland, where the west is all in arms,

And moves with hasty march to join Tyrone,

And all his northern clans. A dreadful pow'r!

Nay more, we have advices from the borders

Of sudden risings, near the banks of Tweed!

'Tis thought, to favour an attempt from Scotland.

Mean while, Tyrone embarks six thousand men

To land at Milford, and march where Essex

Shall join them with his friends.

Q. In league with James!

And plotting with Tyrone! It cannot be.

His very pride disdains such perfidy.

But is not Essex here without my leave!

Against my strict command! that, that's rebellion.

The rest, if true, or false, it matters not.

What's to be done?—admit him to my presence?

No, no—my dignity, my pride forbid it.

Ungrateful man, approach me not! Rise, rise,

Resentment, and support my soul! Disdain,

Do thou a list me.—Yes, it shall be so.

Bur. I see the muses deep; her mind works up—

And paints it's struggling efforts in her face. [wards.

Tyrone's invasion wakes her fear and anger,

And all her soul is one continued storm. [*Aside.*

Q. For once my pride shall stoop; and I will see

This rash, audacious, this once favour'd man;

But treat him as his daring crimes deserve.

Enter Southampton.

South. [*Knocking.*] Permit me, Madam, to approach you thus;

Thus lowly to present the humble suit

Of the much injur'd, faithful, Earl of Essex,

Who dares not, unpermitted, meet your presence.

He begs, most gracious queen, to fall before

Your royal feet, to clear him to his sovereign,

Whom next to Heaven, he wishes most to please.

Let faction load him with her labouring hand,

His innocence shall rise against the weight,

If but his gracious mistress deign to smile.

Q. Let him appear. [*Exit Southampton.*

Now to thy trying task,

My soul! put forth, exert thy utmost strength,

Nor let an injur'd queen be tame.—Lie still,

My heart! I cannot listen to thee now.

Enter Essex and Southampton.

Essex. Forgive, thou injur'd Majesty, thou best

Of queens, this seeming disobedience. See,

I bend submissive in your royal presence,

With soul as penitent, as if before

Th' all-searching eye of Heav'n. But, oh, that frown!

My queen's resentment wounds my inmost spirit,

Strikes me like death, and pierces through my heart.

Q. You have obey'd, my lord! you've serv'd me well!

My deadly foes are quell'd! and you come home

A conqueror! Your country bids you welcome!

And I, your queen, applaud!—Triumphant man!

What! is it thus that Essex gains his laurels?

What! is it thus you've borne my high commission?

How durst you disregard your trusted duty,

Desert your province, and betray your queen?

Essex. I came to clear my injur'd name from imputed guilt, and slanderous accusations. [guilt,

My shame was wasted in each passing gale,

Each swelling tide came loaded with my wrongs;

And echo sounded forth, from faction's voice,

The traitor Essex.—Was't not hard, my queen,

That while I stood in danger's dreadful front,

Encountering death in every shape of terror,

And bleeding for my country?—Was't not hard,

My mortal enemies at home, like cowards,

Should in my absence basely blast my fame?

Q. It is the godlike attribute of kings

To raise the virtuous and protect the brave.

I was the guardian of your reputation,

What malice, or what faction then could reach you?

My honour was expos'd, engag'd for yours;

But you found reason to dislike my care,

And to yourself assum'd the wretched office.

Essex. If aught disloyal in this bosom dwells,

If aught of treason lodges in this heart,

May I to guilt and lasting shame be wedded,

The sport of faction, and the mark of scorn,

The world's derision, and my queen's abhorrence.

Stand forth the villain, whose envenom'd tongue

Would taint my honour and traduce my name,

Or stamp my conduct with a rebel's brand!

Lives there a monster in the haunts of men,

Dares tear my trophies from their pillar'd base,

Eclipse my glory, and disgrace my deeds?

Q. This ardent language, and this glow of soul,

Were nobly graceful in a better cause;

Where virtue warrants, and where truth inspires:

But injur'd truth, with brow invincible,

Frowns stern reproof upon the false assertion,

And contradicts it with the force of facts.

From me you have appeal'd, ungrateful man;

The laws, not I, must listen to your plea.

Go, stand the test severe, abide the trial.

And mourn, too late, the bounty you abus'd.

[*Exeunt Queen, Southampton, &c.*

Essex. Is this the just requital, then, of all

My patriot's ills and oft-encounter'd perils,

Amidst th' inclemencies of camps and climes?

Then be it so.—Unmov'd and dauntless, let me

This shock of adverse fortune firmly stand.

But yet, methinks, 'tis somewhat sudden too!

My greatness, now depriv'd of each support,

Which bore so long it's envy'd weight aloft,

Must quick to ruin fall, and crush my hopes.

Enter Southampton.

South. Alas, my Lord! the queen's displeasure kindles

With warmth increasing; whilst Lord Burleigh labours

To inflame her wrath, and make it still burn fiercer.

Essex. I scorn the blaze of courts, the pomp of

I give them to the winds, and lighter vanity; [kings;

Too long they've robb'd me of substantial bliss,

Of solid happiness, and true enjoyments.

But lead me to my mourning love; alas!

She sinks beneath oppressing ills; she fades,

She dies for my afflictive pangs, and seeks

Me, sorrowing, in the walks of woe. Distraction!

Oh! lead me to her, to my soul's desire.

South. Let caution guide you in this dangerous

Confiscer well, my lord, the consequence; [step.

For should the queen (forbid it Heaven!) discover

Your private loves, your plighted hands, no power

On earth could step between you and destruction.

Enter Burleigh.

Bur. My lord of Essex, 'tis the queen's command,

That you forthwith resign your staff of office;

And further, she confines you to your palace.

Essex. Welcome, my fate. Let fortune do her utmost;

I know the worst, and will confront her malice,

And bravely bear the unexpected blow.

Bur. The queen, my lord, demands your quick compliance.

Essex. Go, then, thou gladsome messenger of ill,

And, joyful, feast thy fierce rapacious soul

With Essex' sudden and accomplish'd fall.

The trampled corse of all his envy'd greatness,

Lies prostrate now beneath thy savage feet;

But still th' exalted spirit mounts above thee.

Go, tell the queen thy own detested story:

Full in her sight disclose the snaky labyrinth

And lurking snares you plant in virtue's path,

To catch integrity's unguarded step.

Bur. How ill repaid are public toils and cares!

Your country has impeach'd, your queen accus'd you;

To these address your best defence, and clear

Your question'd conduct from disloyal guilt.

What answer to the queen shall I return?

Essex. My staff of office I from her receiv'd.

And will to her, and her alone, resign it.
Bur. This bold refusal will incense the queen.
 This arrogance will make your guilt the stronger.

[Exit.]
Soub. Sustain, my noble friend, thy wonted
 Collect thy fortitude, and summon all [greatness;
 Thy soul, to bear with strength this crushing weight;
 Which falls severe upon thee; whilst my friendship
 Shall lend a helping hand, and share the burden.
 I'll hence with speed, and to the queen repair,
 And all the power of warmest words employ,
 To gain you yet one audience more, and bring
 Her majesty to milder thoughts. Farewel. *[Exit.]*

Essex. As newly wak'd from all my dreams of
 These guided visions of deceitful joys, [glory,
 I stand confounded at th' unlook'd-for change,
 And scarcely feel this thunder-bolt of fate.
 The painted clouds, which bore my hopes aloft,
 Alas, are now vanish'd to yielding air,
 And I am fall'n indeed! —
 How weak is reason, when affection pleads!
 How hard to turn the fond, deluded heart,
 From flatt'ring toys, which sooth'd it's vanity!
 The laurell'd trophy, and the loud applause,
 The victor's triumph, and the people's gaze;
 The high-hung banner, and recording gold,
 Subdue me still, still cling around my heart,
 And pull my reason down.

Enter Rutland.

Rut. Oh, let me fly
 To clasp, embrace, the lord of my desires!
 My soul's delight, my utmost joy, my husband!
 I feel once more his panting bosom beat;
 Once more I hold him in my eager arms,
 Behold his face, and lose my soul in rapture.

Essex. Transporting bliss! my richest, dearest
 treasure!

My mourning turtle, my long absent peace,
 Oh, come yet nearer, nearer to my heart!
 My raptur'd soul springs forward to receive thee:
 Thou heav'n on earth, thou balm of all my woe!

Rut. O, shall I credit then each ravish'd sense;
 Has pitying Heav'n consented to my prayer?
 It has, it has; my Essex is return'd!
 But language poorly speaks the joys I feel;
 Let passion paint, and looks express my soul.

Essex. With thee, my sweetest comfort I'll retire
 From splendid palaces, and glitt'ring throngs,
 To live embosom'd in the shades of joy,
 Where sweet content extends her friendly arms,
 And gives encreasing love a lasting welcome.
 With thee I'll timely fly from proud oppression,
 Forget our sorrows, and be blest for ever.

Rut. O, let us hence, beyond the reach of power;
 Where fortune's hand shall never part us more.
 In this calm state of innocence and joy,
 I'll press thee to my throbbing bosom close.
 Ambition's voice shall call in vain; the world,
 The thankless world, shall never claim thee more,
 And all thy business shall be love and me.

Essex. The queen incens'd at my return, abandons
 To Cecil's malice, and the rage of faction. *[me]*
 I'm now no more the fav'rite child of fortune:
 My enemies have caught me in the toils,
 And life has nothing worth my wish, but thee.

Rut. Delusive dream of fancied happiness!
 And has my fatal fondness then destroy'd thee?
 Oh, have I lur'd thee to the deadly snare
 Thy cruel foes have laid?
 I dreaded Cecil's malice, and my heart,
 Longing to see thee, with impatience, listen'd
 To it's own alarms; and prudence sunk beneath
 The force of love.

Essex. Forbear, my only comfort;
 Oh, tell me not of danger, death, and Burleigh;
 Let every star shed down it's mortal bane
 On my unshelter'd head: whilst thus I fold
 Thee in my raptur'd arms; I'll brave 'em all,
 Defy my fate, and meet it's utmost rigour.

Rut. Alas, my lord! consider where we are.
 Oh! 'tis the queen's apartment; death is here.
 Each precious moment is by fate beset,
 And time stands trembling whilst we thus confer.

Essex. Then, let us hence from this detested place;
 My restor'd soul disdains the house of greatness,
 Where humble honesty can find no shelter.
 From hence we'll fly, where love and virtue call;
 Where happiness invites—that wish of all:
 With sweet content enjoy each blissful hour,
 Beyond the smiles of fraud, or frowns of power.

[Exeunt.]

ACT III.

Enter Burleigh and Nottingham.

Not. **M**Y lord, I've sought you out, with
 much impatience.
 You've had an audience of the queen: what
 follow'd?

Bur. Soon as I told her Essex had refus'd
 To yield his dignities, and staff of office,
 She seem'd depriv'd of reason for a moment;
 Her working mind betray'd contending passions,
 Which, in her alter'd face, appear'd by turns.
 She paus'd, like thunder in some kindling cloud,
 Then instant burst with dreadful fury forth:
 Let him to the Tow'r.—I instantly withdrew,
 But soon was countermanded, and desir'd
 To bring the earl of Essex to her presence.
 I like it not; and much I fear, she'll stand
 Between this high offender and the laws.

Not. Is Essex then secur'd?

Bur. Madam, he is;
 And now comes guarded to the court.

Enter Gentleman.

Gent. Madam, the queen
 Is in her closet, and desires to see you. *[Exit.]*
Not. I attend her.

Bur. She wants, no doubt, to be advis'd by you.
 Improve this fair occasion, urge it home!

Not. I know her foible. Essex long has had
 An interest in her heart, which nothing can
 O'erturn, except his own ungovern'd spirit.
 It is, indeed, the instrument by which
 We work, and cannot fail, if rightly us'd.

Bur. Madam, the queen expects you instantly.
 I must withdraw, and wait the earl's arrival.

[Exeunt.]

Queen discovered.

Q. Ill-fated, wretched man! perverse and ob-
 stinate!

He counterworks my grace, and courts destruction.
 He gives his deadly foes the dagger to
 Destroy him, and defeats my friendly purpose,
 Which would, by seeming to abandon, save him.
 Nor will he keep the mask of prudence on
 A moment's space.—What! must I bear this scorn?
 No: let me all the monarch re-assume;
 Exert my power, and be myself again.—
 Oh, ill-performing, disobedient heart! —
 Why shrink'st thou, fearful, from thy own resolve?

Enter Nottingham.

Thou com'st in time; I'm much disturb'd, abus'd,
 My Nottingham, and would complain to thee

Of insolence, neglect, and high contempt.
 Essex presum'd to dictate laws within
 My palace gates. How say'st thou, Nottingham?

Not. Surely, my gracious queen, it cannot be!
 His heat and passion never could impel him
 To take so bold a step, to such rash guilt:
 Methinks his very honour should prevent it.

Q. Thy open, honest mind, untutor'd seems
 In life's ungrateful and degenerate school;
 Where stubborn vice in every form appears,
 Mocking correction's ineffectual rod.
 It is, indeed, an evil hard to bear;
 This haughty man has wanton'd with my grace,
 Abus'd my bounty, and despis'd my favours.
 Repentment, then, shall in her turn prevail;
 To angry laws I'll give this victim up.

Not. His conduct has, I fear, been too unguarded:
 His hasty temper knows not where to stop.
 Ambition is the spur of all his actions,
 Which often drives him o'er his duty's limits;
 (At least, his enemies would have it so.)
 But malice, Madam, seldom judges right.

Q. Oh, Nottingham! his pride is past enduring:
 This insolent, audacious man, forgets
 His honour and allegiance;—and refus'd
 To render up his staff of office, here,
 Beneath my very eye.

Not. Presumptuous man!
 Your faithful subjects will resent this pride,
 This insolence, this treason to their queen;
 They must, my gracious sovereign.—'Tis not safe
 To shield him longer from their just resentment.
 Then give him up to justice and the laws.

Q. You seem well pleas'd to urge severity.—
 Offended majesty but seldom wants
 Such sharp advisers.—Yet no attribute
 So well befits the exalted seat supreme,
 And power's disposing hand, as clemency.
 Each crime must from it's quality be judg'd;
 And pity there shou'd interpose, where malice
 Is not th' aggressor. Hence! I'll hear no more.

Not. Madam, my sentiments were well intended;
 Justice, not malice, mov'd my honest zeal.
 My words were echoes of the public voice,
 Which daily rises, with repeated cries
 Of high complaint, against this haughty lord.
 I pity, from my heart, his rash attempts,
 And much esteem the man.

Q. Go, Nottingham,
 My mind's disturb'd, and send me Rutland hither.

[*Exit. Not.*]

O, vain distinction of exalted state!
 No rank ascends above the reach of care,
 Nor dignity can shield a queen from woe.
 Despotic nature's stronger sceptre rules,
 And pain and passion in her right prevail.
 Oh, the unpy'd lot, severe condition,
 Of solitary, sad, dejected grandeur!
 Alone condemn'd to bear th' unsocial throb
 Of heart-felt anguish, and corroding grief;
 Depriv'd of what, within his homely shed,
 The poorest peasant in affliction finds,
 The kind, condoling comfort of a dear
 Partaking friend.—

Enter Countess of Rutland.

Rutland, I want thy timely
 Counsel. I'm importun'd, and urg'd to punish—
 But justice, sometimes, has a cruel sound.
 Essex has,
 No doubt, provok'd my anger, and the laws;
 His haughty conduct calls for sharp reproof,
 And just correction. Yet I think him guiltless
 Of studied treasons, or design'd rebellion.

Then tell me, Rutland, what the world reports,
 What censure says of his unruly deeds.

Rut. The world, with envy's eye beholds him me
 Madam, 'tis malice all, and false report. [rit
 I know his noble heart, 'tis fill'd with honour:
 No trait'rous taint has touch'd his generous soul;
 His grateful mind still glows with pure affection;
 And all his thoughts are loyalty and you.

Q. I grant you, Rutland, all you say, and think
 The earl possess'd of many splendid virtues.
 What pity 'tis, he should afford his foes
 Such frequent, sad occasions to undo him!

Rut. What human heart can, unafflicted, bear
 Such manly merit in distress: beset
 By cruel foes, and faction's savage cry?
 My good, my gracious mistress, stretch, betimes,
 Your saving arm, and snatch him from destruction
 From deadly malice, treachery, and Cecil.

O, let him live, to clear his conduct up!
 My gracious queen, he'll nobly earn your bounty,
 And with his dearest blood deserve your mercy.

Q. Her words betray a warm, unusual fervour;
 Mere friendship never could inspire this transport.

[*Aside.*]

I never doubted but the earl was brave;
 His life and valiant actions all declare it:
 I think him honest too, but rash and headstrong.
 I gladly would preserve him from his foes,
 And therefore am resolv'd once more to see him.

Rut. Oh, 'tis a godlike thought, and Heav'n's
 itself

Inspires it. Sure some angel moves your heart,
 Your royal heart, to pity and forgiveness.
 This gracious deed shall shine in future story,
 And deck your annals with the brightest virtue;
 Posterity shall praise the princely act,
 And ages yet to come record your goodness.

Q. I'll hear no more—Must I then learn from you
 To know my province, and be taught to move,
 As each designing mind directs? Leave me.

Rut. Her frowns are dreadful, and her eye looks
 terror.

I tremble for my Essex. Save him, Heav'n! [*Exit.*]

Q. Her warmth has touch'd me home. My
 jealous heart,
 My fearful and suspicious soul's alarm'd.

Enter Burleigh, Raleigh, and others.

Bur. The earl of Essex waits your royal will.

Q. Let him approach—And now, once more,
 support

Thy dignity, my soul; nor yield thy greatness
 To strong usurping passion—But, he comes.

Enter Essex, Southampton, Guards.

Essex. Permitted thus to bend, with prostrate
 heart,

[*Kneels.*]

Before your sacred majesty; I come,
 With every grateful sense of royal favour,
 Deeply engrav'd within my conscious soul.

Q. I sent my orders for your staff of office.

Essex. Madam, my envy'd dignities and honours,
 I first from your own royal hand receiv'd;
 And therefore justly held it far beneath me
 To yield my trophies, and exalted power,
 So dearly purchas'd in the field of glory,
 To hands unworthy. No, my gracious queen,
 I meant to lay them at your royal feet;
 Where life itself a willing victim falls,
 If you command.

Q. High swelling words, my lord, but ill supply
 The place of deeds, and duty's just demand.
 In danger's onset, and the day of trial,
 Conviction still on acting worth attends;
 Whilst mere professions are by doubts encumber'd.

Essex. My deeds have oft declar'd, in danger's
How far my duty and my valour lead me. [front,
Allegiance still my thirst of glory fir'd,
And all my bravely gather'd, envy'd laurels,
Were purchas'd only to adorn my queen.

Q. Your guilty scorn of my intrusted power,
When with my mortal foes you tamely dally'd,
By hardy rebels brav'd, you poorly fought
A servile pause, and begg'd a shameful truce.
Should Essex thus, so meanly compromise,
And lose the harvest of a plenteous glory,
In idle treaties, and suspicious parly?

Essex. Oh, deadly stroke! My life's the destin'd
mark.

The poison'd shaft has drunk my spirits deep.
Is't come to this? Conspire with rebels! Ha!
I've serv'd you, Madam, with the utmost peril,
And ever glory'd in th' illustrious danger;
Where famine fac'd me with her meagre mien,
And pestilence and death brought up her train.
I've fought your battles, in despite of nature,
Where seasons sicken'd, and the climate was fate.

My power to parly, or to fight, I had
From you; the time and circumstance did call
Aloud for mutual treaty and condition;
For that I stand a guarded felon here—a traitor,
Hemm'd in by villains, and by slaves surrounded.

Q. Shall added infelence, with crest audacious,
Her front uplift against the face of power.
Think not that injur'd majesty will bear
Such arrogance uncheck'd, or unchastis'd.
No public trust becomes the man, who treads,
With scornful steps, in honour's sacred path,
And stands at bold defiance with his duty.

Essex. Away with dignities and hated trust,
With flattering honours, and deceitful power!
Invert th' eternal rules of right and justice;
Let villains thrive, and out-cast virtue perish;
Let slaves be rais'd, and cowards have command.
Take, take your gaudy trifles back, those baits
Of vice, and virtue's bane—'Tis clear my queen,
My royal mistress, casts me off; nay, joins
With Cecil to destroy my life, and fame.

Q. Presuming wretch! Audacious traitor!
Essex. Traitor!

Q. Hence from my sight, ungrateful slave, and
At distance to revere your queen. [learn

Essex. Yes; let
Me fly beyond the limits of the world,
And nature's verge, from proud oppression far,
From malice, tyranny, from courts, from you.

Q. Traitor! villain! [Strikes him.

Essex. Confusion! what, a blow!
Refrain, good Heav'n! down, down, thou rebel
passion,

And, judgment, take the reins. Madam, 'tis well—
Your soldier falls degraded.

His glory's tarnish'd, and his fame undone.
O, bounteous recompence from royal hands!
But you, ye implements, beware, beware,
What honour wrong'd, and honest wrath can act.

Q. What would the imperious traitor do? My
Beyond thy wretched purpose stands secure. [life
Go, learn at leisure what your deeds deserve,
And tremble at the vengeance you provoke.

[Exeunt all but Essex and Southampton.

Essex. Disgrac'd and struck! Damnation! Death
Revenge! Revenge! [were glorious.

South. Alas, my friend! what would
Thy rage attempt? Consider well the great
Advantage now your rash, ungovern'd temper,
Affords your foes. The queen, incens'd, will let
Their fury loose.—I dread the dire event.

Essex. Has honest pride no just resentment left?
Nor injur'd honour feeling? Not revenge!

High Heaven shall hear, and earth regret my wrongs.
Hot indignation burns within my soul.

I'll do some dreadful thing—I know not what!

Some deed as horrid as the shame I feel,

Shall startle nature, and alarm the world.

Then hence, like lightning, let me furious fly,

To hurl destruction at my foes on high;

Pull down oppression from its tyrant seat,

Redeem my glory, or embrace my fate. [Exeunt.

A C T IV.

Enter Queen and Nottingham.

Q. NOT taken yet!

Not. No, Madam; for the earl
Of Essex, leagu'd with desperate friends, made
And obstinate resistance; till, at length, [strong
O'erpower'd by numbers, and increasing force,
He fled for shelter to a small retreat,
A summer-house upon the Thames; resolv'd
To perish, rather than submit to power.

Q. Oh, where shall majesty bestow its favours,
Since Essex has a traitor prov'd to me,
Whose arm hath rais'd him up to power and greatness;
Whose heart hath shar'd in all his splendid triumphs,
And feels, e'en now, his trait'rous deeds with pity?
But hence with pity, and the woman's pangs;
Resentment governs, and the queen shall punish.

Enter Burleigh.

Bur. Illustrious queen, the traitors all are seiz'd.
Th' intelligence was true. Their black debates
Were held at Drury-house. The dire result
Was this: that Essex should alarm the citizens
To open mutiny, and bold rebellion.

Their purpose was to seize your royal palace,
And sacred person; but your faithful people,
As by one mind inform'd, one zeal inspir'd,
Rose up at once, and with their virtue quell'd them.

Q. Thanks to their honesty, to their loyal hearts.
But say, were any persons else concern'd,
Of high distinction, or of noted rank?

Bur. Yes, Madam, many more, seduc'd of late,
'Mong whom the bold Southampton foremost stands,
They're now our pris'ners, and are safe secur'd;
But Essex, with Southampton, and the rest
Of greater note, I would not dare dispose of
Without your royal mandate; and they now
Attend without, to know your final pleasure.

Q. Is this the just return of all my care;
My anxious toilsome days, and watchful nights?
Have I sent forth a wish, that went not freighted
With all my people's good? Or, have I life,
Or length of days desir'd, but for their sake?
The public good is all my private care.
Then could I think this grateful life
Contain'd one traitor's heart? But, least of all,
That Essex's breast should lodge it? Call the monster,
And let me meet this rebel face to face.

Do you withdraw, and wait within our call.

[Exit Burleigh, &c.

Enter Essex,

You see we dare abide your dang'rous presence,
Tho' treason sits within your heart enthron'd,
And on that brow rebellion lours, where once
Such boasted loyalty was said to flourish.
How low the traitor can degrade the soldier!
Guilt glares in conscious dye upon thy cheek,
And inward horror trembles in thine eye.
How mean is fraud! How base ingratitude!

Essex. Forbear reproach, thou injur'd majesty,
Nor wound, with piercing looks, a heart already
With anguish torn, and bleeding with remorse.
Your awful looks, alone, are arm'd with death,
And justice gives them terror.

Q. Hapless man! [thee on
What cause could prompt, what fiend could urge
To this detested deed? Could I from thee
Expect to meet this base return? from thee,
To whom I ought to fly, with all the confidence
That giving bounty ever could inspire,
Or seeming gratitude and worth could promise?

Essex. Alas! I own my crimes, and feel my
treasons;

They press me down beneath the reach of pity.
Despair alone can shield me from myself.
Oh, let the little space I live be curs'd
With countless woes; let death, unpitied, come;
If all my life can feel, or fame can suffer,
Can serve to mitigate my queen's displeasure,

Q. My pride forbids me to approach thee more;
My pity, rather, would relieve thy sorrow.
The people's clamours, and my special safety,
Call loud for justice, and demand your life.
But if forgiveness from an injur'd queen
Can make the few short hours you live more easy,
I give it freely from my pitying heart;
And with my willing power could grant thee more.

Essex. Oh, sounds angelic! goodness undeserv'd!
My swelling heart can keep no bounds, my soul
Flows o'er.—And will my gracious queen forgive me?
Oh, let me prostrate thus before you fall,
My better angel, and my guardian genius!
Permit me, royal mistress, to announce
My faithful sentiments, my soul's true dictates;
Vouchsafe your Essex but this one request,
This only boon, he'll thank you with his last,
His dying breath, and bless you in his passage.

Q. Rise, my lord,
If aught you have to offer can allay
Your woes, and reconcile you to your fate,
Proceed;—and I with patient ear will listen.

Essex. My real errors, and my seeming crimes,
Would weary mercy, and make goodness poor;
And yet the source of all my greatest faults
Was loyalty mislaid, and duty in extreme.
So jealous was my sanguine heart, so warm
Affection's zeal, I could not bear the least
Suspicion of my duty to my queen.

This drove me from my high command in Ireland;
This, too, impell'd me to that rude behaviour
Which justly urg'd the shameful blow I felt;
And this (O, fatal rashness!) made me think
My queen had given her Essex up, a victim
To flatterers' schemes, and wicked policy.
Stung by that piercing thought, my madness flew
Beyond all bounds, and now, alas! has brought me
To this most shameful fall; and, what's still worse,
My own reproaches, and my queen's displeasure.

Q. Unhappy man! My yielding soul is touch'd,
And pity pleads thy cause within my breast.

Essex. Say but, my gracious sovereign, ere I go
For ever from your presence, that you think me
Guiltless of all attempts against your throne,
And sacred life. Your faithful Essex ne'er
Could harbour in his breast so foul a thought.
Believe it not, my queen. By Heav'n, I swear,
When in my highest pitch of glory rais'd,
The splendid noon of fortune's brightest sun-shine,
Not ages of renown could yield me half
The joy, nor make my life so greatly blest,
As having yours, tho' for a single hour.

Q. My lord, I think you honest. Nay, I own,

Whatever coldness I put on, was meant
To save you from the malice of your foes, [em
I judg'd your crimes, what you yourself pronounc
The rash effect of an intemperate zeal.

Essex. Was ever wretch like Essex thus undone
By goodness in excess, and lavish'd grace!
Oh, I could tear my erring heart, with these
Revening hands!—What blessings have I lost!
What clemency abus'd!—Now could I wish
For lengthen'd life—indeed, for endless years.
A whole eternity's too short, to shew
My pious sorrows, and atone my folly.

Q. My lord, I would convince you that I still
Regard your life, and labour to preserve it;
But cannot screen you from a public trial.
With prudence make your best defence: but should
Severity her iron jurisdiction
Extend too far, and give thee up condemn'd
To angry laws, thy queen will not forget thee.
Yet, lest you then should want a faithful friend,
(For friends will fly you in the time of need)
Here, from my finger, take this ring, a pledge
Of mercy; having this, you ne'er shall need
An advocate with me; for whensoever
You give, or send it back, by Heav'n, I swear,
As I do hope for mercy on my soul,
That I will grant whatever boon you ask.

Essex. Oh, grace surprizing! most amazing
goodness!

Words cannot paint the transports of my soul.
Let me receive it on my grateful knees,
At once to thank and bless the hand that gives it.

Q. Depend, my lord, on this; 'twixt you and me
This ring shall be a private mark of faith

[Gives the ring.]

Inviolate. Be confident, cheer up,
Dispel each melancholy fear, and trust
Your sovereign's promise; she will ne'er forsake you.

Essex. Let Providence dispose my lot as 'twill,
May watchful angels ever guard my queen;
May healing wisdom in her counsels reign,
And firm fidelity surround her throne;
May victory her dreaded banners bear,
And joyful conquests crown her soldier's brow;
Let every bliss be mingled in her cup,
And Heaven at last become her great reward. [Exit.

Q. 'Tis done;
And yet foreboding tremors shake my heart.
Something sits heavy here, and presses down
My spirits with it's weight. What can it mean?
Suppose he is condemn'd; my royal word
Is plighted for his life; his enemies,
No doubt, will censure much.—No matter; let 'em.
I know him honest, and despise their malice.

Enter Countess of Rutland.

Rut. Where is the queen? I'll sail before her feet
Prostrate, implore, beseege her royal heart,
And force her to forgive.

Q. What means this frenzy?

Rut. Oh, gracious queen, if ever pity touch'd
Your generous breast, let not the cruel axe
Destroy his precious life; preserve my Essex,
My life, my hope, my joy, my husband.

Q. Husband! What sudden deadly blow is this!
Hold up, my soul, nor sink beneath this wound.
You beg a traitor's life!

Rut. Oh, gracious queen!
He ever lov'd—was ever faithful, brave—
If nature dwells about your heart, oh, spare
Me not! My lord! my love! my husband bleeds!

Q. Take her away.

Rut. Here on this spot I'll fix,
Here lose all sense. Still let me stretch these arms,

Inexorable queen, he yet may live.

Oh, give him to my poor afflicted heart!

One pitying look, to save me from distraction.

Q. I'll hear no more. I'm tortur'd—take her hence.

Rut. Nay, force me not away—Inhuman wretches!

Oh, mercy, mercy! Then to thee, good Heav'n,

(My queen, my cruel queen, denies to hear me)

To thee I call, to thee for mercy bend.

Melt down her bosom's frozen sense to feel

Some portion of my deadly grief, my fell

Distracti'on. Turn, oh! turn, and see a wife,

A tortur'd wife ———

Q. Why am I not obey'd?

Rut. Nay, do not thus

Abandon me to fell despair. Just Heaven,

That sees my sorrows, will avenge the wrong,

This cruel wrong, this barbarous tyranny. [Forced off.]

Q. Wedded to Rutland! Most unhappy pair!

And, oh, ill fated queen! Never till now

Did sorrow settle in my heart it's throne.

No black despair it's cloudy curtain draws

Around thy setting peace, where joy alas!

No more shall dawn, nor smiling hope return.

Recall my pledge of safety from his hands,

And give him up to death!—But life or death

To me is equal now.

Unhappy state, where peace shall never come!

One fatal moment has confirm'd my doom,

Turn'd all my comfort to intestine strife,

And fill'd with mortal pangs, my future life. [Exit.]

ACT V.

Enter Raleigh, and Lieutenant of the Tower.

Ral. THEIR peers, with much indulgence,

heard their plea,

And gave them ample scope for their defence;

But nought avail'd, their crimes were too notorious.

They bore their sentence with becoming spirit;

And here's the royal mandate for their deaths.—

The lady Nottingham!—What brings her hither?

Enter Lady Nottingham.

Not. Lieutenant, lead me to the earl of Essex,

I bring a message to him from the queen.

Lieu. He's with his friend, the brave Southamp-

ton, Madam,

Preparing now for his expected fate.

But I'll acquaint his lordship with your pleasure.

[Exit.]

Ral. What means this message? Does the queen

relent?

Not. I fear she does:

Go you to court, for Cecil there expects you.

I've promis'd to acquaint him with what passes

'Twixt me and Essex, e'er I see the queen.

Ral. Madam, I go.

[Exit.]

Not. Now, vengeance, steel my heart!

Offended woman, whilst her pride remains,

To malice only and revenge will bow;

And every virtue at that altar sacrifice.

But see, he comes, with manly sorrow clad.

There was a time, that presence cou'd subdue

My pride, and melt my heart to gentle pity.

I then could find no joy but in his smiles;

And thought him lovely as the summer's bloom:

But all his beauties are now hateful grown.

Enter Essex.

Essex. Whether you bring me death or life I know

not.

But if strict friendship and remembrance pass

May aught preface to my afflicted heart,
Sure mercy only from those lips should flow,
And grace be utter'd from that friendly tongue.

Not. My lord, I'm glad you think me still your friend.

I come not to upbraid but serve you now;

And pleas'd I am to be the messenger

Of such glad tidings, in the day of trouble,

As now I bring you. When the queen had heard

That by the lords you were condemn'd to die,

She sent me, in her mercy, here to know

If you had aught to offer that might move

Her royal clemency to spare your life.

Essex. Could any circumstance new lustre add

To my dread sovereign's goodness, 'tis the making

The kind, the generous Nottingham it's messenger.

Oh, Madam! cou'd my glowing heart express

It's grateful sentiments, 'twou'd speak such language

As angels utter, when they praise their Maker.

Not. 'Tis well my lord; but there's no time to spare,

The queen impatient waits for my return.

Essex. My heart was wishing for some faithful friend,

And bounteous Heav'n hath sent thee to my hopes.

Know then, kind Nottingham, for now I'll trust

Thee with the dearest secret of my life,

'Tis not long since the queen (who well foresaw

To what the malice of my foes wou'd drive me)

Gave me this ring, this sacred pledge of mercy;

And with it, made a solemn vow to Heav'n,

That, whensoever I should give or send

It back again, she'd freely grant whate'er

Request I then shou'd make.

Not. Give, give it me,

My lord, and let me fly on friendship's wings,

To bear it to the queen, and to it add

My prayers and influence to preserve thy life.

Essex. Oh, take it then—it is the pledge of life,

The precious spring that drives my vital stream

Around, and keeps my heart still warm:

Oh, it is my dear Southampton's

Last, last remaining stay, his thread of being,

Which more than worlds I prize.—O, take it then,

Take it, thou guardian angel of my life,

And offer up the incense of my pray'r!

Oh, beg, intreat, implore her majesty,

From public shame, and ignominious death,

And from th' obdurate axe, to save my friend.

Not. My lord, with all the powers that nature

gave,

And friendship can inspire, I'll urge the queen

To grant you your request.

Essex. Kind Nottingham,

Your pious offices shall ever be

My fervent theme; and if my doubtful span

Relenting Heav'n should stretch to years remote,

Each passing hour shall still remind my thoughts,

And tell me that I owe my all to thee.

My friend shall thank you, too, for lengthen'd life.

And now I fly with comfort to his arms,

To let him know the mercy that you bring. [Exit.]

SCENE, the Court.

Enter Queen and Burleigh.

Q. Ha! is not Nottingham return'd?

Bur. No, Madam.

Q. Dispatch a speedy messenger to haste her.

My agitated heart can find no rest.

So near the brink of fate—unhappy man!

Enter Nottingham.

How now, my Nottingham, what news from Essex?

What says the earl?

Not. I wish, with all my soul,

Th' ungrateful task had been another's lot.

I dread to tell it—Loft, ill-fated man!

Q. What means this mystery, this strange behaviour?

Pronounce—declare at once; what said the earl?

Not. Alas, my queen, I fear to say; his mind Is in the strangest mood, that ever pride On blackest thoughts begot. He scarce would speak; And when he did, it was with fullness, With hasty tone, and down-cast look.

Q. Amazing!

Not feel the terrors of approaching death! Nor yet the joyful dawn of promis'd life!

Not. He rather seem'd insensible to both, And with a cold indifference heard your offer; Till warming up, by slow degrees, resentment Began to swell his restless, haughty mind, And proud disdain provok'd him to exclaim Aloud, against the partial power of fortune, And faction's rage. I begg'd him to consider His sad condition, nor repulse with scorn The only hand that could preserve him.

Q. Ha!

What! Said he nothing of a private import? No circumstance—no pledge—no ring?

Not. None, Madam, But with contemptuous front disclaim'd at once Your proffer'd grace; and scorn'd, he said, a life Upon such terms bestow'd.

Q. Impossible!

Could Essex treat me thus? You basely wrong him, And wrest his meaning from the purpos'd point. Recal betimes the horrid words you've utter'd; Confess, and own the whole you've said was false.

Not. Madam, by truth, and duty both compell'd, Against the pleadings of my pitying soul, I must declare (Heav'n knows with what reluctance) That never pride insulted mercy more. He ran o'er all the dangers he had past; His mighty deeds, his service to the state; Accus'd your majesty of partial leaning To favourite lords, to whom he falls a sacrifice; Appeals to justice, and to future times, How much he feels from proud oppression's arm: Nay, something too he darkly hinted at, Of jealous disappointment, and revenge.

Q. Eternal silence seal thy venom'd lips! What hast thou utter'd, wretch, to rouse at once A whirlwind in my soul, which roots up pity, And destroys my peace?

Let him this instant to the block be led. [*Exit. Not.* Upbraid me with my fatal fondness for him! Ungrateful, barbarous ruffian! Oh, Elizabeth! Remember now thy long establish'd fame, Thy env'd glory, and thy father's spirit. Accuse me of injustice too, and cruelty! Yes, I'll this instant to the Tower, forget My regal state, and to his face confront him! Confound th' audacious villain with my presence, And add new terrors to th' uplifted axe. *Exit.*

SCENE, the Tower.

Essex and Southampton discovered.

Essex. Oh, name it not! my friend shall live, he I know her royal mercy, and her goodness, [shall] Will give you back to life, to length of days, And me to honour, loyalty, and truth. Death is still distant far.

South. In life's first spring Our green affections grew apace and prosper'd; The genial summer swell'd our joyful hearts, To meet and mix each growing fruitful wish. We're now embark'd upon that stormy flood Where all the wise and brave are gone before us, Ere since the birth of time, to meet eternity.

And what is death, did we consider right?

Shall we, who fought him in the paths of terror, And fac'd him in the dreadful walks of war, Shall we astonish'd shrink, like frighted infants, And start at scaffolds, and their gloomy trappings?

Essex. Yet still I trust long years remain of friendship.

Let smiling hope drive doubt and fear away, And death be banish'd far, where creeping age, Disease and care, invite him to their dwelling. I feel assurance rise within my breast, That all will yet be well.

South. Count not on hope—

We never can take leave, my friend, of life, On nobler terms. Life! what is life? A shadow! It's date is but th' immediate breath we draw; Nor have we surety for a second gale; Ten thousand accidents in ambush lie For the embody'd dream.

A frail and fickle tenement it is, Which like the brittle glass that measures time, Is often broke, ere half it's sands are run.

Essex. Such cold philosophy the heart disdains, And friendship shudders at the moral tale. My friend, the fearful precipice is past, And danger dare not meet us more. Fly swift, Ye better angels, waft the welcome tidings Of pardon to my friend; of life and joy.

Enter Lieutenant.

Lieu. I grieve to be the messenger of woe, But must, my lords, intreat you to prepare For instant death. Here is the royal mandate That orders your immediate execution.

Essex. Immediate execution!—What, so sudden! No message from the queen, or Nottingham?

Lieu. None, Sir.

Essex. Deluded hopes! Oh, worse than death! Perfidious queen, to make a mock of life! My friend, my friend destroy'd! Oh, piercing thought!

Oh, dismal chance!—In my destruction ruin'd! In my sad fall undone! Why could not mine, My life atone for both; my blood appease? Can you, my friend, forgive me?

South. Yes, O yes,

My bosom's better half, I can. With thee I'll gladly seek the coast unknown, and leave The lessening mark of irksome life behind. With thee, my friend, 'tis joy to die! 'tis glory; For who would wait the tardy stroke of time, Or cling, like reptiles, to the verge of being, When we can bravely leap from life at once, And spring triumphant in a friend's embrace?

Enter Raleigh.

Ral. To you, my lord Southampton, from the queen

A pardon comes: your life her mercy spares.

Essex. For ever blest be that indulgent power Which saves my friend! This weight ta'en off, my soul

Shall upward spring, and mingle with the blest.

South. All-ruling heavens, can this, can this be just?

Support me; hold, ye straining heart-strings, hold, And keep my sinking frame from dissolution. Oh, 'tis too much for mortal strength to bear, Or thought to suffer! No, I'll die with thee. They shall not part us, Essex.

Essex. Live! oh, live,

Thou noblest, bravest, best of men and friends, Whilst life is worth thy wish, till time and thou Agree to part, and nature send thee to me; Thou gen'rous soul, farewell;—live and be happy!

And, oh! may life make largely up to thee
Whatever blessing fate has thus cut off
From thy departing friend.

Lieu. My lord, my warrant

Strictly forbids to grant a moment's time.

South. Oh, must we part for ever?—Cruel
Wilt thou then tear him hence?—fortune!

Let me cling round thy sacred person still,
Still clasp thee to my bosom close, and keep
Stern fate at distance.

Effex. Oh, my friend, we'll meet
Again where virtue finds a just reward,
Where factious malice never more can reach us.
Recall thy reason, be thyself once more.—
I fear it not.—This hideous monster, death,

When seen at distance, shocks weak nature's eye;
But reason, as it draws more near, defies it.—

I thank thy sorrows, but cou'd spare 'em now.

I need not bid thee guard my fame from wrongs:

And, oh! a dearer treasure to thy care

I trust, than either life or fame—my wife.

Her bitter sorrows, pierce my soul; for her

My heart drops blood!—Oh, she'll want a friend.

Then take her to thy care; do thou pour balm

On her deep-wounded spirit, and let her find

My tender helps in thee.—I must be gone,

My ever faithful, and my gallant friend.—

I prythee, leave this woman's work.—Farewell—

Take this last, dear embrace.—Farewell for ever!

South. My bursting breast!—I fain would speak,

Are poor—Farewell!— [but words

But we shall meet again, embrace in one

Eternal band, which never shall be loos'd. [Exit.

Effex. To death's concluding stroke, lead on,

lieutenant.

My wife!—Now reason, fortitude, support me;

For now, indeed, comes on my forest trial.

Enter Countess of Rutland.

Oh, thou last, dear reserve of fortune's malice!

For fate can add no more—Oh, com'st thou then,

In this dread hour, when all my straining thoughts

Are struggling in the tenderest ties of nature!

Oh, com'st thou now t' arrest my parting soul,

And force it back to life!

Rut. Thou sole delight,

Thou only joy which life cou'd ever give,

Or death deprive me of; my wedded lord;

I come, with thee determin'd to endure

The utmost rigour of our angry stars;

To join thee, fearless, in the grasp of death,

And seek some dwelling in a world beyond it.

Effex. Too much, thou partner of this dismal

hour,

Thy gen'rous soul would prompt thee to endure;

Nor can thy tender, trembling heart, sustain it.

Long years of bliss remain in store for thee;

And smiling Time his treasures shall unfold

To bribe thy stay.

Rut. Thou cruel comforter!

Alas! what's life, what's hated life to me?

Alas! this universe, this goodly frame,

Shall all as one continued curse appear,

And every object blast, when thou art gone.

Effex. Oh, strain not thus the little strength

I've left,

The weak support that holds up life, to bear

A few short moments more, it's weight of woe,

It's loss of thee. Oh, turn away those eyes,

Nor with that look melt down my fix'd resolve—

And yet a little longer let me gaze

On that lov'd form. Alas! I feel my sight

Grows dim, and reason from her throne retires;

For pity's sake, let go my breaking heart,

And leave me to my fate.

Rut. Why wilt thou still

Of parting talk, since life it's thousand gates

Unbars to let us through together?

Oh, that the friendly hand of Heav'n would snatch

Us both at once, above the distant stars,

Where fortune's venom'd shafts can never pierce,

Nor cruel queen's destroy!

Effex. The awful Searcher, whose impartial eye

Explores the secrets of each human heart,

And every thought surveys, can witness for me,

How close thy image clings around my soul:

Retards each rising wish, and draws me back

To life, entangled by that lov'd idea.

When sell necessity those ties shall break,

For quickly break they must—when I from earth

On faith's white angel wings to heaven shall soar,

Thy lasting form shall still my mind possess,

Where bliss supreme each faculty o'erwhelms,

And raptur'd angels glow.

Lieu. My lord, it now grows late.

Effex. Lead on.

Rut. Stay, stay, my love! my dearest, dying lord!

Ah, whither wouldst thou go? Ah, do not leave me!

Alas! I'll hasten to attend your flight;

And nature gives consent we should not part.

I feel each faculty for fate prepare,

And my quick soul wou'd fain set out before you.

[Faints.
Effex. Thou sinking excellence! thou matchless

woman!

Shall fortune rob me of thy dear embrace,

Or earth's whole power, or death divide us now!

Stay, stay, thou spotless, injur'd saint, and take—

Lieu. My lord, already you have been indulg'd

Beyond what I can warrant by my orders.

Effex. Oh, let me on her dying bosom fall,

Embrace her spotless form.—One moment more

Afford me to my sorrows.—Oh, look there!

Cou'd bitter anguish pierce your heart, like mine,

You'd pity now the mortal pangs I feel,

The throbs that tear my vital strings away,

And rend my agonizing soul.—

Lieu. My lord—

Effex. But one short moment, and I will attend.

Ye sacred ministers that virtue guard,

And shield the righteous in the paths of peril,

Restore her back to life, and lengthen'd years

Of joy; dry up her bleeding sorrows all:

Oh, cancel from her thoughts this dismal hour,

And blot my image from her sad remembrance.

'Tis done.—

And now, ye trembling cords of life give way;

Nature and time, let go your hold; eternity

Demands me. [Exit Effex and Lieutenant.

Rut. Where has my lost benighted soul been

wand'ring?

What means this mist that hangs about my mind?

Through which reflection's painful eye discerns

Imperfect forms, and horrid shapes of woe.

The cloud dispels, the shades withdraw, and all

My dreadful fate appears.—Oh, where's my lord,

My life! my Effex! Oh, whither have they ta'en

him?

Enter Queen and Attendants.

Q. To execution! Fly with lightning's wing,

And save him. [Exit one of the attendants.

Rut. Thou saving angel, sent from Heav'n! my

My gracious queen, [queen,

O snatch him from the blow!

Preserve my husband!

Q. Be calm, he shall not die. Rise up. I came

To save his life.

Rut. 'Tis mercy's voice that speaks.
My Essex shall again be mine. My queen,
My bounteous, gracious queen, has laid the word.
May troops of angels guard thy sacred life,
And, in thy latest moments, waft thy soul
To meet that mercy in the realms of joy,
Which now thy royal goodness grants to me.

Enter Burleigh.

Bur. Madam, your orders came, alas! too late.
Ere they arriv'd the axe had fallen on Essex.

Rut. Ha! dead! What hell is this that opens
round me?

What fiend art thou that draws the horrid scene?
Ah, Burleigh! bloody murder, where's my husband?
Destruction seize and madness rend my brain. [band!
See, see, they bend him to the fatal block;
Now, now the horrid axe is lifted high,
It falls, it falls; he bleeds, he bleeds; he dies!

Q. Alas! her sorrows pierce my suffering heart.

Rut. Eternal discord tear the social world.
Arise, despair, possess me all!

Bear, bear me to my murder'd lord, to clasp
His bleeding body in my dying arms,
And in the tomb embrace his dear remains,
And mingle with his dust for ever. [Exit.

Q. Hapless woman!

She shall henceforth be partner of my sorrows;
And we'll contend who most shall weep for Essex.
Oh, quick to kill, and ready to destroy, [To Bur.]

Cou'd no pretext be found, no cause appear,
To lengthen mercy out a moment more,
And stretch the span of grace? O, cruel Burleigh!
This, this was thy dark work, un pitying man!

Bur. My gracious mistress, blame not thus my
My firm obedience to your high command. [duty
The laws condemn'd him first to die; nor think
I stood between your mercy and his life.

It was the lady Nottingham, not I.
Herself confess'd it all, in wild despair;
That from your majesty to Essex sent,
With terms of proffer'd grace, she then receiv'd
From his own hand a fatal ring, a pledge
It seems of much importance, which the earl
With earnest suit, and warm entreaty, begg'd her,
As she would prize his life, to give your majesty.
In this she fail'd—in this she murder'd Essex!

Q. Oh, barbarous woman!

Surrounded still by treachery and fraud!
My fame is foil'd to all succeeding times:
But Heaven alone can view my breaking heart;
Then let it's will be done.—

From hence, let proud, resisting mortals, know
The arm parental, and the indulgent blow.
To Heaven's corrective rod, submissive bend;
Adore it's wisdom, on it's power depend;
Whilst ruling justice guides eternal sway,
Let nature tremble, and let man obey.

[Exeunt omnes.]

